



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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A CENTURY OF SEEKING JUSTICE

Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney's Office Celebrates Centennial

(Tarrant County, TX) – *“The most rewarding job in the law.”* That’s how Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney Sharen Wilson described her experience in this office, surrounded by more than 300 of the state’s finest attorneys and members of the North Texas legal, law enforcement, non-profit and business communities, gathered recently to celebrate the Criminal District Attorney’s office’s 100th anniversary.

On October 19, 1919, former teacher Jesse Brown became Tarrant County’s first Criminal District Attorney, after the Legislature authorized Tarrant County new Criminal District Attorney’s office to handle civil, misdemeanor and felony cases. From his 9 employees, the office has since grown to reflect what is now the nation’s 15th largest county, with more than 340 attorneys, investigators and support staff.

A total of 14 Criminal District Attorneys have led this office since its creation, including Tim Curry, who spent 37 years at the helm as CDA, and for whom our main criminal court building is named. Then-CDA Curry first hired Sharen Wilson to this office as a misdemeanor attorney straight out of law school. The first female Criminal District Attorney in Tarrant’s history, she is now serving her second term in office.

A LEADER IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The office’s centennial celebrates some of the most forward-thinking advances in Texas criminal justice history, forged here in the Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney’s Office. Among the milestones established here have been:

- The hiring of Eva Barnes in 1945, the first female prosecutor in Texas, who would later become the first elected female district judge in Texas;
- The hiring of Ollice Malloy in 1957, the first African American assistant criminal district attorney south of St. Louis;
- Creating the Deferred Prosecution Program in 1974, the first diversion program of its kind in the southwest;
- Creation of the first comprehensive disclosure compliance policies with law enforcement and laboratories in Texas; and
- The first open file policy, pre-dating the standard-setting *Michael Morton Act* by three decades.

DEDICATED TO THE FUTURE

The office continues its goal of creating fair, transparent and effective ways to meet the criminal justice needs of the present and the future. Notable among the achievements of the past half-decade has been the creation of specially-trained prosecution teams to combat Intimate Partner Violence, Elder Financial Fraud, and Adult Sexual Assault, as well as the Tarrant County's first Conviction Integrity Unit, which has quickly become nationally-renowned for its expertise.

The hard work and dedication of the men and women who have served the Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney's office over the past 100 years has been memorialized in a book titled, *A Century of Seeking Justice: A Brief History of the Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney's Office*. Historian Quentin McGown wrote in his forward to the commemorative book, *"the citizens of Tarrant County are rightfully proud of the men, and finally the woman, who upheld, and now expand, the best traditions of fairness, civility and openness that make Tarrant County a beacon in the legal community."*

"My predecessors could never have imagined the way new legislative initiatives, forensic discoveries and cultural changes have continued to shape the criminal justice landscape in this county we love, and in the world around us," said Sharen Wilson. *"As we begin our second century representing this community, I continue to ask of our employees that we meet each new task with the firm knowledge that in this job no day is unimportant, no decision is irrelevant, and no relationship is immaterial. They are all in the mission of providing equal justice for all residents of Tarrant County."*

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